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NSC BRIEFING

25 September 1956

MOROCCO, TUNISIA & ALGERIA

- I. To start with Morocco, it is now a little less than eleven months since the French, in November 1955, restored the deposed Sultan--Mohamed ben Youssef--to the Moroccan throne. By March of this year, the provisional Moroccan government had won formal French recognition of Moroccan independence. Since then, the Moroccans have assumed control over all their governmental functions, including the key areas of foreign affairs and defense.
 - A. Following suspension of the 1912 treaty which had established the French protectorate, Spain in turn, this April, reluctantly surrendered its control over the northern and southern strips of Morocco (held under a bilateral agreement with France).
 - B. By the end of April, Morocco's nationalists had also precipitated a crisis in the international zone of Tangier. As a result, a nine-power conference, convoked by the Moroccan government, will discuss the de-internationalization of Tangier on 8 October.
- II. **Present Problems:** The problems faced by this new nation fall into three main categories--political, economic and international. Politically, Morocco possesses only a handful of experienced officials, but a plentiful supply of politicians. Thusfar, the sultan has emerged both as the dominant and as the unifying force in Moroccan politics, and no steps have yet been taken to curb his absolute authority.

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- A. This August, however, the principal nationalist party, Istiqlal (which holds 11 of 23 portfolios in the coalition provisional government) precipitated a cabinet crisis. Istiqlal demanded the formation of a one-party government.
1. The sultan, who is suspicious of republican tendencies in the extremist faction of Istiqlal, has not yet taken any action on this demand.
 2. He may well give the Istiqlal a few more cabinet posts at the expense of the other two coalition members--the small, French-backed nationalist Shoura party and the independents--which now hold 6 posts each.
- B. Istiqlal is also laying the groundwork for future Moroccan territorial aggrandizement at the expense of France and Spain.
1. The party has revived Moroccan claims to the westernmost portion of Algeria, including the mineral-rich Colomb Bechar area, as well as to Spanish Sahara and French Mauretania.
 2. This claim dates back to the Almohad empire (12-13th century).
- C. Morocco's economic difficulties--which include inflation, unemployment and a flight of French capital--cannot be divorced from its still tense international relations with France.

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1. Morocco has an annual budgetary deficit estimated at \$200 million.
 2. The French are trying to monopolize or control all economic aid received by Morocco.
 3. The Moroccans resent any implied continuation of French dominance through control of the nation's purse-strings.
- D. Both financial and defense agreements, now under negotiation in Paris, are being hampered in two ways.
1. Morocco is set on exercising all its sovereign prerogatives.
 2. France is trying to isolate Morocco from other foreign (and particularly US) influence and assistance.
- E. Aside from their problems with the French, the Moroccans aspire to the international position of a bridge between the West and the Moslem world. They look to the West for economic and technological assistance, but seek to retain cultural and, particularly, religious ties with Islam.
1. Nevertheless, both the sultan and Moroccan officials have been reluctant to establish close ties with Egypt.
 2. Morocco will hold back from membership in the Arab League at least until after the UN endorses Moroccan membership this fall.
 3. Of all the Arab states, Iraq is the one with which Morocco prefers close ties. These may be cemented by a marriage between one of the sultan's daughters and King Faisal.
 4. Although the Istiqlal party actively supports Nasr in its press, Moroccan officials have adopted a moderate attitude toward the Suez crisis.

- F. The Moroccans are reluctant to establish relations with the USSR and the Soviet Bloc.
1. The USSR has pressed Morocco for an exchange of diplomats and may use the October Tangier conference to force the issue.
 2. The USSR participated in the 1945 conference which reestablished this international zone after World War II, although it has never occupied the seat it won on the international Committee of Control.
 3. Bloc trade with Morocco has increased during the past year and Czech interest in Moroccan industrialization is reported.
- G. In its relations with the US, the principal issue for Morocco is the regularization of the status of the five air bases (four Air Force and one Navy) built and occupied by the US under bilateral agreements with France.
1. The Moroccans are still angry over omission of the sultan as a participant in the 1950 negotiations establishing these bases.
 2. The Moroccans are anxious for American economic assistance, however, and the sultan has recently hinted that he would approve continued use of the Moroccan bases were he assured of US aid.
- H. Acutely sensitive to any encroachments on its newly-restored sovereignty, Morocco is seeking to remain aloof from cold war pressures.
1. However, internal pressures have already forced the government to accept Egyptian and Bloc trade offers and cultural exchanges.

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2. Morocco's continuing economic problems make it particularly vulnerable to further Bloc and Egyptian approaches.

III. As to Tunisia, this former French protectorate was granted its independence this March after more than three years of intensive nationalist agitation and disorder.

A. The generally moderate political party of Tunisia's present premier, Habib Bourghiba, and other parties friendly to Bourghiba, presented a national front ticket in the election of a constituent assembly last March. They won all the seats.

1. Since then, Bourghiba has successfully wrested control over Tunisian foreign affairs and defense from the French.
2. The exiled Tunisian extremist, Salah ben Youssef--who considers Bourghiba too conciliatory--seems to have lost most of his following.

IV. The Tunisian government, like Morocco, faces serious economic problems.

- A. Tunisia's economy is weak and the nation lacks natural resources. In the past, France has usually paid 35-40% of Tunisia's annual expenses (a subsidy of some \$75 million).
- B. Today, 400,000 persons (1/3 of the labor force) are unemployed and famine threatens the country's drought-stricken central and southern areas.
1. As with Morocco, France desires that any foreign economic aid for Tunisia be "coordinated" with Paris.
- C. Internationally, friction in Tunisian-French relations is the major problem.
1. One issue is Tunisian sympathy for the Algerian rebels.

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2. Another is Tunisian insistence on complete withdrawal of French forces in Tunisia (some 40,000 troops are there today).
 3. In July, the Tunisians demanded that France turn over military facilities at Bizerte and also refrain from using Tunisia as a staging area against the rebels in eastern Algeria. As a result, negotiations with the French over a defense agreement broke down.
- D. On other international issues, Bourghiba has taken a moderate stand.
1. Tunisia is reluctant to become too closely involved with Egypt and the Arab League.
 2. Bourghiba's position on Suez has also been moderate.
 3. Nevertheless, a strong Pan-Arab movement exists in Tunisia and Bourghiba will be under constant pressure to reorient his generally pro-Western policies.
- E. As in the case of Morocco, the Bloc has been courting Tunisia with offers of cultural and trade exchanges.
1. Reports of Soviet efforts to establish diplomatic relations, however, have been denied by the Tunisians.

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26 September 1950

MOROCCO, TUNISIA & ALGERIA

As the Council is aware, the Moroccans now have control over all their governmental functions, including the key areas of foreign affairs and defense.

- A. They also have taken control of the northern and southern strips of Morocco which Spain formerly held under a bilateral agreement with France.
- B. Finally, the Moroccans have called a nine-power conference for 8 October, to discuss the return of Tangier.

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DOCUMENT NO. 2
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Morocco today faces a number of problems.

A. Thusfar, Sultan Mohamed ben Youssef has emerged as both the dominant and the unifying force in Moroccan politics.

B. However, last month, Morocco's principal nationalist party (Istiqlal) precipitated a cabinet crisis by demanding the formation of a one-party government.

1. The party already holds eleven of the 23 cabinet posts.

2. The sultan, who is suspicious of republican tendencies

in the extremist faction of Istiqlal, has not yet acted on this demand.

It may well give the Istiqlal a few more cabinet posts at the expense of the other two coalition members--the small, French-backed nationalist Shoura party and the independents which now hold 6 posts each.

C. Morocco's economic difficulties--which include inflation, unemployment and a flight of French capital--cannot be divorced from its still tense international relations with France.

1. Morocco has an annual budgetary deficit estimated at \$200 million. Formerly, these deficits were met by France.
2. The French are trying to monopolize or control all economic aid received by Morocco

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3. The Moroccans resent any implied continuation of French dominance through control of the nation's purse-strings.
- B Internationally, the Moroccans look to the West for economic and technological assistance, but seek to retain cultural and, particularly, religious ties with the Moslem world.
1. Of all the Arab states, Iraq is the one with which Morocco prefers close ties. These may be cemented by a marriage between one of the sultan's daughters and King Faisal.
2. Although Egypt has been making strenuous efforts for close ties, both the sultan and Moroccan officials are showing reluctance over these approaches.

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1. The Istiqlal party actively supports Nasr in its press but Moroccan officials have adopted a moderate attitude toward the Suez crisis.
 4. Morocco will hold back from membership in the Arab League at least until after the UN endorses Moroccan membership this autumn.
- E. The Moroccans are reluctant to establish relations with the USSR and the Soviet Bloc.
1. The USSR has pressed Morocco for an exchange of diplomats and may use the October conference on Tangier to force the issue.

In its relations with the US, the principal issue for Morocco is the regularization of the status of five airbases (four Air Force and one Navy) built and occupied by the US under bilateral agreements with France.

1. The Moroccans are still angry over failure to consult the sultan during the 1950 negotiations establishing these bases.
2. The Moroccans are anxious for American economic assistance, however, and the sultan has recently hinted that he would approve continued use of the Moroccan bases were he assured of US aid.

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to Tunisia, this former French protectorate was granted its independence in March 1956.

A Tunisia's present premier, Habib Bourghiba, presented a national front ticket in the election of a constituent assembly last March. His front won all the seats.

1. Since then, Bourghiba has successfully wrested control over Tunisian foreign affairs and defense from the French.
2. The exiled Tunisian extremist, Salah ben Youssef--who considers Bourghiba too conciliatory--seems to have lost most of his following.

B. Tunisia, like Morocco, faces serious economic problems.

1. Tunisia has a weak economy and lacks natural resources.

Today, 400,000 persons (1/3 of the labor force) are unemployed.

2. In the past, France has usually paid 35-40% of Tunisia's annual expenses (a subsidy of some \$75 million).

3. As with Morocco, France desires that any foreign economic aid for Tunisia be "coordinated" with Paris.

IV. Internationally, friction in Tunisian-French relations is the major problem.

A. One issue is Tunisian sympathy and support for the Algerian rebels.

Another is Tunisian insistence on complete withdrawal of French forces in Tunisia (some 50-55,000 are there today).

C. On other international issues, Bourghiba has taken a moderate stand.

1. Tunisia is reluctant to become too closely involved with Egypt and the Arab League.
2. Bourghiba's position on Suez has also been moderate.
3. Nevertheless, a strong Pan-Arab movement exists in Tunisia and Bourghiba will be under constant pressure to reorient his generally pro-Western policies.

D. As in the case of Morocco, the Bloc has been courting Tunisia with offers of cultural and trade exchanges.

1. Reports of Soviet efforts to establish diplomatic relations, however, have been denied by the Tunisians.

V Algeria--as distinguished from Morocco and Tunisia, which were French "protectorates"--is considered by the French to be an integral part of the metropole. Thus, in the French view, the nationalist rebellion in Algeria threatens France's whole international position and even the life of the Fourth Republic.

A. Throughout this spring and early summer, the French have dispatched a steady stream of troops to Algeria, until all military services totaled about 400,000.

B. Their mission was to pacify enough of Algeria by this autumn to enable Paris to negotiate with the rebels from a position of strength.

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1. This pacification drive was to be completed by the time the French National Assembly reconvened (2 October) or, at the latest, before the November session of the UN General Assembly.

C. This French plan has failed and the military goals set for this autumn are obviously beyond reach.

1. The back of the rebellion has not been broken.

2. The rebels have revised their tactics and their hard-core strength is probably still upwards of 20,000 men.

VI Thus, the Mollet government faces an uncomfortable future.

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The continuing Suez crisis, in which some French saw an opportunity for forceful action that could undercut the Algerian rebels, is sure to be debated in the Assembly.

The stalemate within Algeria will also be aired in the Assembly.

Mollet apparently now pins his hopes on the proclamation of a new "basic statute" for Algeria.

1. This "statute" would grant Algeria a limited measure of autonomy, while preserving "indissoluble" ties with France.
2. Such a program is unlikely to find support among Algerian Moslems and probably will be opposed by many French settlers as well.

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Timing of the "statute" move is unsettled. On 26 September, the Mollet cabinet "postponed" action on the matter.

1. Mollet apparently believes that the Suez crisis will absorb Assembly attention in the opening weeks of the session and that the Government's Algeria plan should not be put forward until Suez is out of the way.
2. Thus, the Government hopes to postpone Assembly consideration of the Algeria statute until late in October.

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